

Book Review

Arctic Governance Volume III: Norway, Russia and Asia.

Edited by Svein Vigeland Rottem and Ida Folkestad Soltvedt.

I.B. Tauris: London, 2020. Pp. x + 340.

ISBN: 978-1-7845-3964-1.

Taisaku Ikeshima

The Arctic has recently attracted the world's attention due to its geopolitically and environmentally significant issues. Unlike the Antarctic, the Arctic is an ice-covered area surrounded by five coastal states (the Arctic Five): Canada, Denmark (represented by Greenland), Norway, Russia, and the United States. Among the Five, Russia is one of the greatest stakeholders in terms of territory (including energy and resources) and history. The Arctic Five together with three Arctic states (Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) make up the so-called Arctic Eight. The Arctic Eight have recently become quite powerful in regional governance, especially in the forum of the Arctic Council (AC). However, the AC is only a consultative forum of the governments' officials of member states, where they confer and share information on Arctic matters (with the exception of military issues) without the character of an international institution such as the Antarctic Treaty System. Nevertheless, the AC's role in Arctic governance is so important that some major Asian countries with the will and ability to make scientific contributions (particularly in Arctic research) have lately gained observer status in the AC. Among these, the role of China as a rising economic power has undoubtedly forced the Arctic Eight to be on the alert for China's Arctic policies and engagement in light of the current US-China rivalry.

The book under review gives the reader a large but well-researched picture of the present situation in the Arctic through the lens of one of the smallest states of the Arctic Five, Norway. This book is the third volume of the series *Arctic Governance* edited by Geir Hønneland, former Director of the world-leading think tank Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI), which published the series. The series offers a perspective of Arctic governance

through the Norwegian lens represented by FNI, whose contributions to the academic debate on the Arctic have been immense.

The first volume, published in 2017, deals with law and politics in the Arctic, while the second, published in 2018, deals with energy, living marine resources and shipping in the region. The present volume consists of three parts: Part I on Norway, Part II on Russia, and Part III on Asia (the three stakeholders on which this volume seeks to focus regarding Arctic governance).

Part I, which comprises four chapters, covers Norway's policies and discourses related to the Arctic with special attention on geopolitical and environmental issues in the region.

Chapter 1 (Hønneland and Jensen) discusses the Norwegian High North Policies which have strategically affected the foreign relations with Russia (particularly in the Barents Sea, with the evolution of the bilateral relationship's change in focus from peace and security, which are the legacy of the Cold War, to prioritising business and science). Chapter 2 (Jensen and Rottem) highlights how Norway's special position as a territorial claimant to both the Arctic and the Antarctic has oriented its government, business and science nexus. Norway has historically reflected the overlapping and comparative relations between science (scientists) and politics (political scientists) in both regions. As a member state of the AC, Norway has made efforts to nationally implement several of the AC's recommendations regardless of their non-binding character. Attributing the effectiveness of their soft law characteristics to their precision, stakeholder involvement and monitoring of state behaviour plus malignancy, Chapter 3 (Soltvedt) suggests a scant difference in legal effectiveness between hard and soft law under international law. Discussing the case of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), Chapter 4 (Rottem) acknowledges that by utilizing scientific knowledge of environmental challenges in the Arctic, Norway's advantages in international environmental efforts have successfully contributed to the nomination and regulation of new POPs under the Convention.

Part II, through four chapters, sheds light on Russia's temporal and territorial identities with respect to the Arctic through international relations theories and the relevant rules of the international law of the sea.

Examining several narratives about Russian attitudes toward the High North, Chapter 5 (Hønneland) identifies the discourse of international relations (IR) on Russia's Arctic Policy since the end of the Cold War as two sets of narratives: 'Russia vs. the West' and 'Russia and the Arctic' (as congenital twins), both of which aptly describe the Russian nation, territory and soul beyond time and space. Examining six hypotheses to answer the question 'why was the Barents Sea delimitation dispute resolved in 2010?' based on

Graham Allison's multi-model approach, Chapter 6 (Moe, Fjærtøft and Øverland) attributes the successful and timely resolution between Norway and Russia to the combination of maturing negotiations of both parties and Russia's efforts to settle border disputes with its neighbours in its desire to be seen as a constructive and rule-abiding international actor (with significant help from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the pre-eminent framework for Arctic governance). Partially recalling the four narratives in Chapter 5 ('Russia vs. the West', 'Russia and the Arctic', 'soil and soul' and 'fools and bad roads'), Chapter 7 (Hønneland) addresses (against the backdrop of the successful establishment of the 2010 delimitation line in the Barents Sea between Norway and Russia) Russia's identity as the guarantor of law and order in the Arctic. Chapter 8 (Jensen) addresses major legal issues involved in Russia's 2015 Submission (partially revised from the 2001 Submission) of its claim to an extended continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf under Article 76 of the UNCLOS.

Part III, containing four chapters, discusses the implications of the Asian countries (China, India, Japan, and South Korea) whose Arctic policies have affected those of Arctic coastal states.

Applying stakeholder theory to Asian states who have obtained observer status in the AC, Chapter 9 (Stokke) considers their power, legitimacy and urgency to be increasingly influential on the Arctic coastal states as those stakeholders become more involved in the AC's assessment and guidance activities (such as resource management and environmental protection). Comparing Asia's four largest economies (China, India, Japan and South Korea) as the stakeholders with permanent observer status in the AC, Chapter 10 (Stensdal) highlights the institutions, scientific cruises, infrastructure investments and journal publications involved in the development of Asian Arctic research from 2004–2013 (without making a causal connection between their scientific contributions and political motivations). Providing a fact-based assessment of 'China in the Arctic', Chapter 11 (Stensdal) notes that China's involvement in the Isua iron-ore mine project on Greenland was actually initiated by both London Mining and the Greenlandic government, despite the media's misleading characterization of the Chinese presence in the Arctic. Chapter 12 (Heggelund and Cheng) explores China's engagement in the Arctic and the AC as a 'near-Arctic country' with its Arctic policy white paper of 2018, under which global scientific research on environmental protection and climate changes are emphasised with a special connection to China's domestic climate policies.

The book under review is a good resource for updating those who are interested in this field of study, particularly scholars and experts who have little knowledge of, or

suspicious mind of, Russia's intention towards the Arctic or China's actual engagement in Arctic affairs. Parts II and III of the volume rightly offer us the narratives and detailed data of these two major actors in international relations and economy vis-à-vis the United States. Although the media incessantly reports Russia's common (but one-sided) image of an aggressively adamant dominance in the High North, Part II maintains that Norway understandably accepts Russia's position over the Arctic in light of all the narratives evoked by the Russians, particularly after the conclusion of the 2010 Delimitation Agreement on the Barents Sea (i.e., the guardian of the law and order of the Arctic, territorially and temporarily). Similarly, Part III of the book helps us rectify the false image of a rising China as an expansionist intruder into the Arctic to take the lion's share of its political and economic interests. This misleading characterization created largely by the media is groundless, despite the number of people who continue to reject the easily comparable situation of the South China Sea. The revelation attempted by these Parts will certainly prompt the reader to verify the documents and materials used to enhance his/her arguments for these false images and unfounded illusions of Russia and China in the Arctic.

A great value of this volume and the series as a whole is its fact-based systematic approach to Norway's long-lasting contributions (largely represented by FNI's academic contributions) to the field of Polar research, including Arctic affairs. The reader will learn that even a small stakeholder among the Arctic Five such as Norway can show a great presence (vis-à-vis Russia and Canada, for instance) in the AC and play a significant role in the law-making processes of international institutions, particularly in the fields of maritime affairs and environmental protections. Although Japan, an Asian stakeholder in the Arctic, has long been devoted to scientific research of the Polar areas and launched its Arctic Policy in 2015 following South Korea's precedent, there is still a lack of scholars in Japan in the fields of international law and international relations who will publish any work, in terms of size and quality, comparable to these books in the *Arctic Governance* series.